SOLVEM PROBLER

A Two-Day Seminar on the Essence of Problems

PROBLEM:

STUDENT <u>WANTS</u> SOLUTION BUT <u>DOES NOT</u> REALIZE <u>HOW</u> TO REACH IT.

OH, OH! I'VE GOT A PROBLEM.

DESIRED SOLUTION
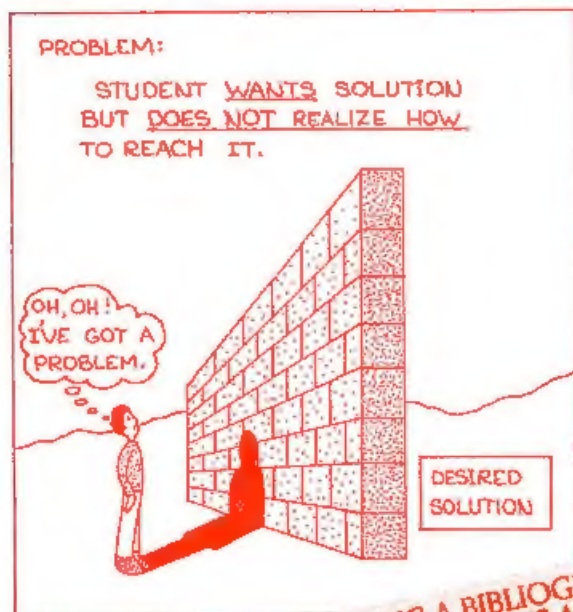
INCLUDING A BIBLIOGRAPHY AND QUICK IMPRESSIONS ABOUT SOME OF THE INCLUDED TEXTS

I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which, when looked at in the right way, did not become still more complicated.
– Poul Anderson

A problem is "a difficulty which may be resolved by problem solving." This is the definition found on Wikipedia, which devotes an article to problem solving while lacking one for problem itself. What if we go beyond this tautological definition, where a problem is simply something to be solved? What does it mean to contemplate a problem without the intent of solving it? Is this even possible? In other words, what are problems made of?

In this two-day seminar, we examined this concept, foundational to design culture, in its purest form – that is, in all its impurity.

~300 BC - 600 AD

Problemata

Aristotele

Abstract

Aristotle's "Problems," part of the 'Corpus Aristotelicum,' is a collection of questions and answers exploring a wide range of topics. These include medicine, biology, physics, meteorology, botany, mathematics, astronomy, optics, acoustics, music, rhetoric, oratory, ethics, and justice. The work investigates diverse phenomena and processes by examining the causes behind them. This approach reflects Aristotle's broader interest in uncovering the reasons for natural and human phenomena. The varied topics highlight the richness of Aristotelian inquiry, with a focus on both scientific and philosophical aspects of understanding the world.

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) was a Greek philosopher and scientist, considered one of the most influential figures in Western history. His work spanned diverse fields including biology, ethics, logic, metaphysics, political theory, and philosophy of science. His writings remain central to contemporary philosophical discussions, especially in ethics, political theory, and metaphysics.
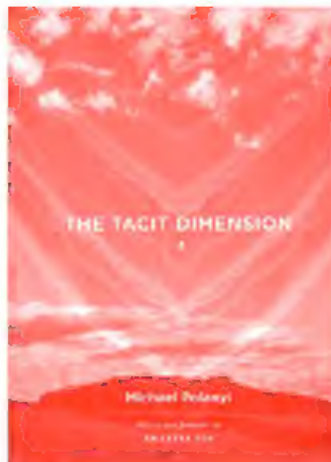
1966

The Tacit Dimension

Michael Polanyi

Abstract

In "The Tacit Dimension" (1967), Michael Polanyi argues that tacit knowledge—tradition, inherited practices, and implied values—is essential to scientific understanding. His work, influential for thinkers like Thomas Kuhn and Karl Popper, challenges the idea that skepticism drives scientific discovery, emphasizing the role of established belief. Now reissued for new scholars, this volume explores how we know more than we can explicitly express, reshaping the way we understand knowledge in science.

Quote

"Yet, looking forward before the event, the act of discovery appears personal and indeterminate. It starts with the solitary intimations of a problem, of bits and pieces here and there which seem to offer clues to something hidden. They look like fragments of a yet unknown coherent whole. This tentative vision must turn into a personal obsession; for a problem that does not worry us is no problem: there is no drive in it, it does not exist."

Keywords

Philosophy of Science, Scientific Knowledge, Promising Problems

Quick Impression

For Polanyi, we know more than we can tell. This is what he refers to as tacit knowledge. This knowledge – made of shared values and traditions – is essential to scientific discovery. Seeing the idea of problem as an engine for scientific discovery, Polanyi opens up a new perspective on problems: as access points for a yet undefined reality, for new theories and discoveries. In an extremely dense argumentation – perhaps due to the fact that it was originated by a set of lectures – the author dissects the idea of problem as a gate to a hidden reality on which science bears. When it comes to discovery, scientists most often rely on intuition to guide their research, rather than objective data and observations. Here, problems serve not merely as obstacles but as possibilities.

Biography

Michael Polanyi, 1891–1976, Hungarian-British polymath: physical chemistry, economics, philosophy. He was an M.D. He went to the University of Budapest for an undergraduate degree in 1913 and the Ph.D. in physical chemistry in 1917. The scientific contributions of Polanyi included the pioneering studies on fiber diffraction analysis, the theory of plastic deformation, which made him get elected to the Royal Society in 1944. In the 1940s, he turned to philosophy, specializing in epistemology and the study of science, where he developed the theory of "tacit knowledge." His main writings are Personal Knowledge (1958) and The Tacit Dimension (1966). The ideas of Polanyi still echo today in all disciplines.

1969

Operating Manual For Spaceship Earth

Richard Buckminster Fuller

Keywords

Biography

Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983) was an architect, engineer, and inventor of the geodesic dome, renowned for his visionary ideas. His essays from the 1960s and 1970s offer a comprehensive view of global challenges, providing timeless insight into today's critical issues. Long out of print, these works are now republished with commentary by Fuller's grandson, Jaime Snyder. Snyder adds background, updates, and interpretations, making Fuller's thoughts accessible to a new generation. These essays serve as invaluable guides, embodying Fuller's unique ability to foresee the pressing problems of our time and offering wisdom for addressing them.

Abstract

Published in 1969, Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth is one of Buckminster Fuller's most popular works, offering a compelling synthesis of his worldview. In this accessible book, Fuller explores humanity's greatest challenges, from survival to automation's role in individualization, and how we can better use resources to end poverty. He critiques specialization and calls for innovative design to guide "spaceship earth" toward sustainability. And it Came to Pass – Not to Stay features Fuller's lyrical essays, blending philosophy and insight on global crises, predictions, and ethics. He urges a new era, always beginning with the universe.

Quote

Quick Impression
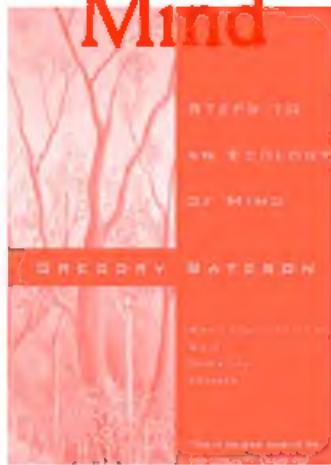
Teaching via Problem Solving

Keywords

Biography

Abstract

Quote

Quick Impression

1972

Steps to an Ecology of Mind

Gregory Bateson

Keywords

Biography

Gregory Bateson was a British-born American anthropologist who greatly contributed to the field of cybernetics. His work ranged through psychiatry, sociology, anthropology, art, biology, cybernetics, and politics. He continued to explore new ways of approaching science. During the 1930s, Bateson conducted anthropological research in New Britain and New Guinea. During his early research, he began to conceptually explore the idea that analogies of form and pattern may exist between apparently diverse fields of thought. In the following years, Bateson continued to investigate relationships between fields.

Abstract

Ecology of mind as Bateson envisioned it, refers to an interdisciplinary approach to probing the way in which consciousness changes and forms patterns, both on a social and individual level. Ecology of mind is based on the model of consciousness, or "mind", as being like an ecosystem, and ideas as being like the flora and fauna of this system. Like the plants and animals in a tangible ecosystem, ideas are then subject to evolution, extinction, or successful flourishing. Drawing on the principles of biological ecology—where scientists seek to foster beneficial processes and mitigate harmful ones—Bateson extended this approach to the realm of thought.

Quote

"The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between how nature works and the way people think."

Quick Impression

What Bateson ultimately advocates is a systematic way of thinking that transcends disciplinary boundaries. He sees the world as a series of systems containing those of individuals, societies and ecosystems. He applies ecological metaphors to human psychology, society, and even knowledge itself, encouraging readers to view ideas and behaviors as part of an interconnected web. In this way, Bateson challenges reductionist approaches to science and thought, promoting instead a framework that recognizes the complexity and interdependence inherent in all systems. The critical takeaway from Bateson's point is that no single organism, idea, or entity operates in isolation. Rather, it is the network of relationships that defines the health and sustainability of the system as a whole.

1977

Are Your Ligths On?
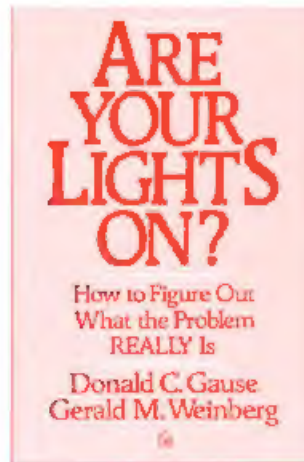
Donald C. Gause
Gerald M. Weinberg

Keywords

Biography

Donald C. Gause is a Principal of Savile Row, LLC, as well as Bartle Professor in Systems Science in the Thomas J. Watson School of Engineering, SUNY/Binghamton. He has worked as an engineer and computer programmer and has managed engineering, programming, and education groups with General Motors and IBM.

Gerald M. Weinberg has worked on transforming software organizations, particularly emphasizing the interaction of technical and human issues. After spending between 1956 and 1969 as software developer, researcher, teacher, and designer of software curricula at IBM, he and his anthropologist wife, Dani Weinberg, formed the consulting firm of Weinberg & Weinberg to help software engineering organizations manage the change process in a more fully human way.

Abstract

Witty and insightful exploration of problem-solving. This engaging book guides readers in identifying the true nature of problems, understanding who is affected, and deciding if they want to solve them. Complete with humorous illustrations, it's a fun yet impactful read. Readers appreciate its informal style and valuable insights, noting its applicability to various fields. Gause and Weinberg emphasize the importance of defining problems clearly, illustrating their points through relatable stories. At just 156 pages, it's a powerful resource for anyone looking to enhance their problem-solving skills.

Quote

Quick Impression

1981

What Is a Problem That We May Solve It?[1]

Thomas Nickles

Abstract

Quote

Quick Impression
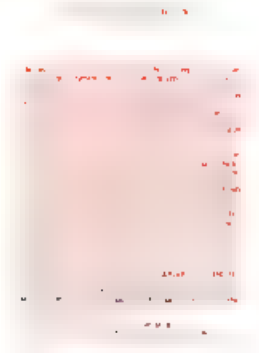
Biography

Thomas Nickles (born 14 February 1943) is an American historian and philosopher of science. He has taught at the University of Illinois (Urbana) and at the University of Chicago. He is now Foundation Professor of Philosophy at the University of Nevada, Reno.

1982

The Concept of Problem

The Concept of Problem

Gene P. Agre

Abstract

In The Concept of Problem, Gene P. Agre explores what defines a problem, emphasizing that a problem exists with n a context that includes undesirable aspects perceived as difficult and solvable. He discusses the implications of recognizing a problem and how this awareness shapes responses in various physical, social, psychological, or intellectual situations. Agre's analysis contributes to understanding the fundamental nature of problems and problem-solving processes in education and beyond.

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Gene P. Agre is an Associate Professor in the College of Education,. University of Maryland.

1987

The Imaginary Institution of Society

Cornelius Castoriadis

Abstract

Castoriadis offers a brilliant and far-reaching analysis of the unique character of the social-historical world and its relations to the individual, to language, and to nature. He argues that most traditional conceptions of society and history overlook the essential feature of the social-historical world, namely that this world is not articulated once and for all but is in each case the creation of the society concerned. In emphasizing the element of creativity, Castoriadis opens the way for rethinking political theory and practice in terms of the autonomous and explicit self-institution of society

Quote

"I desire and I feel the need to live in a society other than the one surrounding me. Like most people, I can live in this one and adapt to it - at any rate, I do live in it. [...] I am not asking for immortality, ubiquity or omniscience. I am not asking society to 'give me happiness'; [ ] In life, however, as it comes to me and to others, I run up against a lot of unacceptable things, I say that they are not inevitable and that they stem from the organization of society."

Keywords

Society, Identity, Representation, Revolution

Biography

Cornelius Castoriadis was a significant intellectual figure in France from the late 1940s, trained in philosophy while also practicing as an economist and psychologist. He authored over twenty major works that explore creativity's implications across various fields, including politics, economics, and ontology. Castoriadis emphasized the political and ethical dangers of a world that neglects autonomy, advocating for self-imposed limits. Influenced by figures like the Ancient Greeks, German Idealists, Marx, and Heidegger, he engaged dynamically with contemporaries such as Claude Lefort and Jean-François Lyotard. Castoriadis championed the need for "lucid" deliberation and autonomy, positioning philosophy as a means to question societal norms.

Quick Impression

In The Imaginary Institution of Society Castoriadis faces the question of the raising of the new. How and why does the status quo change? From a fast reading, we gather that the author draws a parallel between the inner need of one's own freedom of expression and the social revolution. The first appearance of personal need happens through the psyche's representations, such as dreams and child plays. When someone's will to express and fulfill these needs reach the level of reality, but is prevented by institutions, laws, morals, and others, if the person doesn't accept it, they contribute to the production of the new by pushing forward the limits of society and establish a new paradigm which will allow the satisfaction of their needs.

1989

"Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword" in Psyche
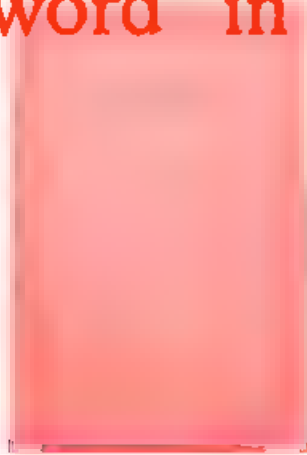
Jacques Derrida

Abstract

Psyche: Inventions of the Other is the first publication in English of the twenty-eight essay collection Jacques Derrida published in two volumes in 1998 and 2003. Advancing his reflection on many issues, such as sexual difference, architecture, negative theology, politics, war, nationalism, and religion, Volume II also carries on Derrida's engagement with a number of key thinkers and writers: De Certeau, Heidegger, Kant, Lacoue-Labarthe, Mandela, Rosenszweig, and Shakespeare, among others. Included in this volume are new or revised translations of seminal essays (for example, "Geschlecht I Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference," "Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand," "How to Avoid Speaking. Denials," and "Interpretations at War Kant, the Jew, the German")

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Jacques Derrida (July 15, 1930 – October 9, 2004) was a French philosopher who profoundly influenced 20th-century thought. Born in El Biar, Algeria, he faced early disruptions due to anti-Semitic policies during World War II. After moving to Paris, he studied at the École Normale Supérieure and taught at the Sorbonne. Derrida is best known for developing deconstruction, articulated in seminal works like Of Grammatology and Writing and Difference. His international recognition grew in the late 1960s, leading to teaching roles in the U.S. and a focus on ethical and political themes in later years. Derrida's legacy continues to spark debate today

1991

The Assault on Culture

Stewart Home

Abstract

" A straightforward account of the vanguards that followed Surrealism" Lettrisme, Fluxus, Neoism and others even more obscure" Village Voice. It is a healthy corrective to the overly aestheticised view of 20th century avant-garde art that now prevails." City Limits. " Much of the information is taken from obscure sources and the book is essential reading for anyone interested in the subject. It demystifies the political and artistic practices of opponents to the dominant culture and serves as a basic reference for a field largely undocumented in English It is also engagingly honest, unpretentious, questioning and immediate in its impact" Artists Newsletter.

Quote

Keywords

Capitalism, Political Intervention, Revolutionary Potential, Cultural Commodification

Biography

Stewart Home is the most out there writer on the planet - the only person on earth who is visible to the naked eye from outer space! He really does burn that brightly. The London Review of Books has praised Home by saying: "I really don't think anyone who is at all interested in literature has any business not knowing the work of Stewart Home." However, this notorious egg bagel eater prefers to liken himself to "a proletarian comedian with Tourette's spewing obscenities". He much prefers standing on his head and reciting sexually explicit passages from his work at public events to courting the literary establishment.

Quick Impression

Stewart Home's The Assault on Culture reveals how the illusion of autonomy and self-sufficiency is eroded by external commodification, resource networks, and technological systems in modern society These theories can be applied to the study of starlight Island, showing that although Xingguang Island seems to pursue self-sufficiency, its operation is highly dependent on external infrastructure and resource supply. This dependence blurs the boundaries between independence and dependence, undermines the utopian idea of self-sufficiency, and highlights the central role of infrastructure and globalized networks in maintaining this illusion This provides important theoretical support for the paper to demonstrate how starlight Island's infrastructure dependence weakens self-sufficiency. The book emphasizes the radicalism of the cultural war, criticizes the separation of art and politics, and how to change social structures through subversive cultural activities.

1991

The Universal Traveler

Don Koberg & Jim Bagnall

Abstract

The Universe Traveler by Don Koberg and Jim Bagnal is a guide that uses a journey metaphor to navigate the creative process and problem-solving. It outlines a model that consists of seven stages: accepting the situation, analyzing the problem, defining goals, ideating solutions, selecting the best options, implementing the chosen solution, and evaluating the results. This framework encourages individuals to approach challenges with a structured mindset, fostering creativity and helping to transform dreams into actionable plans. The book is designed to serve as a valuable resource for anyone seeking to enhance their creative and problem-solving skills

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall co-authored *The Universal Traveler* (1971), a widely recognized guide to creative problem-solving and design thinking. Koberg, an architect and educator, taught design at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, from 1962 to 1992. He held degrees in architecture from Tulane University and the University of Washington. Bagnall, along with Koberg, developed the "soft systems" approach, which simplifies complex problems into manageable steps. Their book uses travel as a metaphor for problem-solving, applying a systematic approach to innovation and creativity that has influenced modern design thinking. Together, they have made lasting contributions to creative and educational methodologies

1994

The Perfect Crime
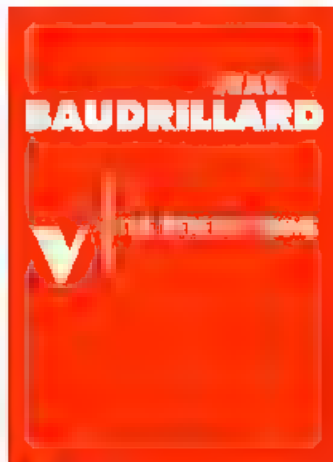
Jean Baudrillard

Keywords

Biography

Jean Baudrillard was a French sociologist, philosopher and poet, with interest in cultural studies. He is best known for his analyses of media, contemporary culture and technological communication, as well as his formulation of concepts such as hyperreality. Baudrillard wrote about diverse subjects, including consumerism, critique of economy, social history, aesthetics, Western foreign policy, and popular culture.

Abstract

In *The Perfect Crime*, Jean Baudrillard investigates the "murder" of reality, exploring how media and technology have caused reality to vanish under the glare of "real-time" information. Rather than merely lamenting this disappearance, Baudrillard offers a penetrating critique of the social, political, and cultural consequences of this phenomenon in late 20th-century democracies. He examines how oppressive transparency, relentless positivity, and the hyperreality of high-definition media erode our critical thinking and sense of the real. Baudrillard's work reveals the profound effects of this disappearance on modern life, making it a key reflection on contemporary culture.

Quote

Quick Impression

1995

Difference & Repetition

Gilles Deleuze

Abstract

Difference and Repetition is a seminal work in contemporary philosophy by Gilles Deleuze, offering a profound critique of identity. Essentia for literary critics and philosophers, the book develops two key concepts pure difference and complex repetition, exploring their interrelation. Difference signifies divergence and decentering, while repetition involves displacement and disguise. This work marks a significant shift in French thought from Hegel and Marx to Nietzsche and Freud, deftly establishing a fundamental critique of Western metaphysics. Through its innovative ideas, *Difference and Repetition* has become a classic, nfluencing various fields and reshaping philosophical discourse

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) was a French antirationaist philosopher and writer. He stud ed philosophy at the Sorbonne starting in 1944 and jo ned its facuity in 1957 later teaching at the University of Lyons and the University of Paris V II Deleuze retired from teaching n 1987 His early works, David Hume (1952) and Nietzsche and Ph osophy (1962), examined thinkers who challenged traditional philosophy's claims about human reason and reality In the 1960s, he produced two major original works, Difference and Repetition (1968) and The Logic of Sense (1969)

1998

What is Problem Solving?

What Is Problem Solving?

Michael E. Martinez

Abstract

Errors are part of the process of problem solving, which implies that both teachers and learners need to be more tolerant of them, Mr Martinez points out. If no mistakes are made, then almost certainly no problem solving is taking place.

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Michael E. Martinez was a professor of education at the University of California, Irvine, specializing in cognition, intelligence, and educational psychology. He earned his Ph.D. from Stanford University and was a former high school science teacher. Martinez's research focused on enhancing problem-solving skills, intelligence, and innovative approaches to science and math education. He published several works, including *What is Problem Solving?*, and contributed to educational assessments and cognitive studies. His impactful career included various prestigious fellowships and grants related to educational research and learning.

1999

The Shape of Things

Vilém Flusser

Abstract

This book presents the first English collection of essays by media critic and philosopher Vilem Flusser, highlighting the idea that our future relies on design. Through insightful discussions of everyday objects like wheels, carpets, pots, umbrellas, and tents, Flusser examines the interconnections between art and science, theology and technology, and archaeology and architecture. He argues that formal creativity can produce both destructive weapons and significant works of art. Flusser emphasizes that the design and shape of objects embody both threats and opportunities, underscoring the vital role of designers in shaping a better future.

Quote

"To live means to proceed towards death. On the way, one came across things that blocked one's path. These things called 'problems' had therefore to be removed. 'To live' then meant to resolve problems in order to be able to die. (…) Non-things now flood our environment from all directions, displacing things. These non-things are called 'information'"

Keywords

Design Philosophy, Tangible/Intangible, Information, Digitalization

Biography

Vilém Flusser (1920 – 1991) was a media philosopher and writer born in Prague. He held Brazilian citizenship and wrote most of his work in German and Brazilian Portuguese. Flusser's work notably elaborates a theory of communication, theorising the epochal shift from what he termed "linear thinking" (based on writing) toward a new form of multidimensional, visual thinking embodied by digital culture. For him, these new modes and technologies of communication make possible a society (the "telematic" society) in which dialogue between people becomes the supreme value. Flusser draws from Martin Buber, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Thomas Kuhn, among others.

Quick Impression

In a world of (physical) things, problems are tangible and concrete, with clear-cut solutions. As the glass of modernism shatters and pieces become immaterial information—non-things—problems lose their defined borders and spread across multiple dimensions. The author argues that this transition from a tangible to an intangible world requires a new framework for understanding problems. When a problem has numerous ramifications, outlining it becomes a problem in itself, meaning that 'to live' is to navigate rather than to handle or solve. We move from problems to programs; it's "not a question of action but of sensation." In this new paradigm, humans don't die from unresolved issues but from system errors. Although the chapter Non-thing 1 may seem fatalistic, Flusser suggests that we will come to realize that the idea of materiality is relatively recent. Our objective materiality is something new, and opening the door to immateriality and non-things could offer an alternative way of living, one that prioritizes experience. Even if problems evaporate, we still have to deal with them.

2002

Problem Solved

Michael Johnson

Abstract

This book examines the theme of "problem solving" in design and communication, focusing on how designers and advertisers interpret briefs and create innovative solutions to keep brands relevant. It addresses challenges such as revitalizing tired brand identities and navigating propaganda thoughtfully. Each chapter focuses on a specific problem and concludes with a detailed case study illustrating a unique solution. Featuring hundreds of examples from a diverse array of international agencies and designers—both contemporary and class c—the book provides an informative and engaging discussion of communications and advertising throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Michael Johnson is the founder and creative director of Johnson Banks, a London-based design consultancy. His agency is known for its innovative approach to branding and communication, having worked with major clients such as Virgin Atlantic, the British Government, and Procter & Gamble. Johnson is recognized for his contributions to both design theory and practice. He frequently writes and lectures internationally, covering topics related to design and communication.

2003

What is a Problem?

What is a problem?

Thomas Osborne

Biography

His work is focused on the issue of power and authority. He has worked on liberalism, Montesquieu and issues of power. In his work in the epistemology of the social and human sciences he's concerned to outline the extent to which human social relations are characteristed by aspects of power. He is currently writing a book with Professor Nikolas Rose of the Australian National University on the status of the concept of humanity in the human sciences.

Abstract

This article compares Georges Canguilhem and Henri Bergson's conceptions of "problematology," highlighting the central role of the "problem" in their philosophies of life. Canguilhem's model shifts focus from legislative philosophy and epistemology to ethics, emphasizing that vitalism reflects a refusal to assume complete control over all dimensions of life. Similarly, Michel Foucault, despite addressing different subjects, adopts a comparable approach in his historical problematology of the sciences of "man" and government. Foucault's work also embodies an ethical refusal of the notion that we fully possess the dimensions of our anthropological essence, underscoring the complexity of human existence

Quote

Quick Impression

2008

Thinking in Systems

Thinking in Systems

Donella H. Meadows

Donella H. Meadows

Abstract

Thinking in Systems, edited by Diana Wright, is a concise guide to systems thinking, offering insights for solving global issues like war, poverty, and environmental degradation. Donella Meadows emphasizes that these problems are system failures, which cannot be fixed by addressing isolated parts. The book equips readers with conceptual tools for systems thinking, encouraging them to focus on what matters, not just what can be measured. Meadows also stresses the importance of humility and continuous learning. In an increasingly complex world, this book provides a vital framework for finding proactive and effective solutions.

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Dr. Donella H. Meadows, a Pew Scholar in Conservation and Environment and a MacArthur Fellow, was one of the most influential environmental thinkers of the twentieth century. After receiving a Ph.D in biophysics from Harvard, she joined a team at MIT applying the relatively new tools of system dynamics to global problems.

2008

What is a Problem?
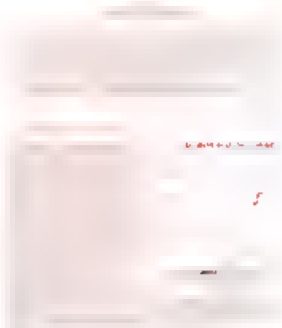
Per Holth

Biography

Professor Per Holth received his license to practice psychology in 1983, and his Ph D n 2000, with a dissertation on the generality of stimulus equivalence. His clinical work has been in services for people with autism and developmental disabilities, in psychiatric units, and in the military services. His research activities span basic research, on stimulus equivalence and joint attention, as well as applied work and management of large research projects. Per Holth has taught classes in behavior analysis and learning principles at the University of Oslo and Oslo and Akershus University College (OAUC) since 1982, and joined the faculty of OAUC and the Program for learning in complex systems, as an associate professor in 2004 and as full professor in 2006.

Abstract

The current paper describes important events in the history of research on problem solving and discusses questions regarding the classification of problems First, the main research traditions and major sesearch findings in the field are described. Some major problems in the attempt to define a problem, including the issue of novelty, are discussed A solution is suggested, based upon the definition of a problem situation as one that no prevailing three-term contingency has established as a discriminative stimulus for an action that produces a reinforcer. The final section is concerned with some differences between cognitivistic and behavioral treatments of problem solving

Quote

Quick Impression

2011

25 modi per piantare un chiodo

Enzo Mari

Abstract

Enzo Mari's 25 modi per piantare un chiodo alternates between considerations and reflections on the design practice and includes autobiographical notes. The author speaks about himself, the period of his childhood and early youth, from the thirties and forties, the art education at Academy of Brera in Milan, and the following phase of his intense artistic activity. Since the early years of his professional activity he has spent his energy in search of a theory that would unify humanistic ideas about the relationship between aesthetics and function.

Quote

"E poi, se esistesse un ponte, gli spiriti maligni che forse vivono sull'altra sponda la sera potrebbero raggiungere le loro case."

Keywords

Cognition, Innovation, Problem Solving

Biography

Enzo Mari (born April 27, 1932, in Novara, Italy–died October 19, 2020) was an Italian post-Modernist artist, writer, and product and furniture designer. He incorporated ideas of the arts and crafts practices, and of communism as an essential part of his design practice and philosophy, opposing the idea that good design is a privilege for the wealthy.

Quick Impression

At the start of the book Enzo Mari showcases how he thought the invention of the bridge came to life. He discloses his example in terms of (history of) innovation, but it's fair to substitute this word with problem. A problem can be a torment: it makes one be hectic and relentless, but not only this, it also makes one seem not understood and ridiculous in front of other's eyes. This happens because dealing with a problem is an onerous act in terms of time. Then Mari departs from the notion-definition of problem as problem solving. He does this by stating that, often, one doesn't deal with a problem because is either afraid, not knowledgeable enough, or even superstitious. Important aspects that are not taken into consideration in the problem-solving way of thinking, which causes an overt optimism in trying to get ultra-efficient in time-management. Still, by the end of his storytelling, he finds himself offering a solution to the problem. "It's like in war times: one needs to advance by the millimiter, trying to not retreat as much as possible (the essential compromises)."

2016

Staying with the Trouble

Donna Haraway

Abstract

In Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucenem, Donna Haraway offers a provocative new way of rethinking our relationships with the Earth and its inhabitants Haraway challenges the traditional human-centered narratives and introduces the concept of the "Chthulucene," an alternative to the Anthropocene that emphasizes more symbiotic and less destructive relationships between humans and the non-human world

Quote

"Relays, string figures, passing patterns back and forth, giving and receiving, patterning, holding the unasked-for pattern in one's hands, response-abı ity; that ıs core to what I mean by staying with the trouble ın serıous multispecies worlds."

Keywords

Nonhuman species, Narrative and Storytelling, Sympoiesis

Biography

Donna Haraway(Born September 6, 1944), is an American professor emerita in the history of consciousness and feminist studies departments at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a prominent scholar in the field of science and technology studies. She has also contributed to the intersect.on of ınformation technology and feminist theory, and is a leading scholar in contemporary ecofeminism. Her work criticizes anthropocentrism, emphasizes the self-organizing powers of nonhuman processes, and explores dissonant re ations between those processes and cultural practices, rethinking sources of ethics.

Quick Impression

In a brief overview of Donna Haraway's book "Staying with the Trouble," she introduces a new perspective on the relationships between human and non-human species In the first chapter, she presents the storytelling method of speculative fabulation, which diverges from traditional academic writing by incorporating elements of science fiction, narrative, and speculative fiction Haraway uses this technique to challenge conventional approaches in science and invites a more complex understanding of reality that includes science fiction and unrealized possibilities. Using pigeons as an example, she develops relationships that extend beyond humans to non-human species, emphasizing kinship over genetics This approach provides me with a constructive concept for rethinking the relationships between different species.

2018

What is a Wall?

Rivista di estetica

What is a wall?

Ernesto C. Sferrazza Papa

Abstract This paper explores the ontology of political artefacts—material objects that shape social and political environments. The central question is whether such artefacts are political because their materiality imposes norms, or because they reflect and reproduce power relations. The paper critiques key theories, including technological determinism, social constructivism, and Actor-Network-Theory, that address the interaction between humans and objects. Ultimately the author proposes "material contextualism" as a new approach, arguing that political artefacts, like walls, inscribe power relations onto space. The conclusion defends this theory as essential for understanding how material objects influence social and political dynamics

Quote "[ ] when we relate artefacts to political power it is crucial to try to understand if we are dealing with political artefacts or with a political analysis of artefacts."

Keywords Ontology, Political Artifact, Contextualism

Biography Ernesto Sferrazza Papa received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Turin in 2016 under the direction of Professor Gianluca Cuozzo. His thesis focused on the relationship between space and power in modernity and postmodernity. In 2014, he spent 4 months as a guest doctoral student at the Center for Religious Studies and Research, at the University of Vilnius, under the direction of Professor Rita Serpytyte

Quick Impression

Before analysing the problematics, there is a question of whether the object in discussion imposes a problem or is a mere description of the problem. The author took the example of "the wall", a political artefact a heated topic in today's geopolitical debates. He proposed a philosophical question of whether "such an artefact is political because its materiality imposes a social or political norm, or because it simply describes and reproduces certain relations of power." In the article Sferrazza lays out the shortfalls of several frameworks that are used to discuss the politics of artifacts radical realism (for proposing "objects having politics"), constructivism (for its emphasis on technological neutrality and human agency), and Actor-Network Theory (for failing to identify responsibilities under the "generalised symmetry" principle) However, what the author proposed as "material contextualism" sounds more like a peace-making framework, recognising the effect of materiality, context of use, and interpretation as a symbol But was there peace to be made in the first place? Those existing theories might not be contradictory, but meant to bring the public's attention to one part of the larger problem – securitarian ideology and ethnicity. Problematising other theoretical frameworks may also help reinforce the rigor of one's own argument.

Putting Problematization to the Test of Our Present

Isabelle Stengers

Biography

Isabelle Stengers (born 1949) is a Belgian philosopher of science noted for her collaboration with the Nobel-prize winning physical chenist Ilya Prigogine. Together they produced two landmark books on chaos and complexity theory, Order Out Of Chaos in 1984, and The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos and the New Laws of Nature in 1997

Abstract

In "Putting Problematization to the Test of Our Present," Isabelle Stengers analyzes Michel Foucault's concept of "problematization" and its relevance to contemporary issues, particularly the ecological crises exacerbated by climate change. Stengers traces the philosophical evolution of problematization from Gaston Bachelard's epistemological approach to Gilles Deleuze's emphasis on its creative potential. She argues for a critical awareness of how we are impacted by our environment, advocating for a reflective engagement that can reshape our understanding and responses to current challenges. This essay highlights the necessity of allowing our experiences to inform and transform our thinking

Quote

Quick Impression

2020

The World as Project

Friedrich von Borries

Abstract

In The World as Project, Friedrich von Borries presents a manifesto advocating for a political theory of design that responds to contemporary challenges He argues that design shapes the conditions under which we live, and when it limits our choices, it leads to subjugation Von Borries calls for a design approach that fosters survival and societal well-being, emphasizing the need for alternative modes of living that resist totalitarianism and promote collective creativity

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

Biography

Friedrich von Borries (1974) teaches design theory at the Hamburg University of Fine Arts (HFBK). As a contemporary analyst and designer of the future, he operates in the border areas of urban development, architecture, design and art.

2020

Design o progettualità?

Salvatore Zingale

Keywords

Biography

Salvatore Zingale is Associate Professor (Philosophy and Theory of Languages) at the Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano, and teaches Design Semiotics in the School of Design. He graduated with Umberto Eco at DAMS in Bologna with a thesis on writing systems and the different forms of visualisation of poetry

Abstract

Design or projectuality? Project as inventive transformation–
We are often led to think about the terms "design" and "project" as synonyms. But this is not entirely true. The English noun design also contains other meanings, which we can consider as the premises, or conditions, of every design action: drawing, shape, purpose, intention. The Semiotics that is interested in design faces a choice: either limiting itself to the analysis of artefacts, regarded as texts with which we interact in social and daily life, or choosing to investigate also and above all the processes underlying the project action. In the latter case, it is a question of following a path still barely explored, which will have to tend to develop, if possible, a real semiotic logic of projectuality

Quote

Quick Impression

2022

Non-things

Non-things

HAN

Byung-Chul Han

Biography

Byung-Chul Han (born 1959) is a South Korean-born philosopher and cultural theorist living in Germany. He studied metallurgy at Korea University in Seoul before he moved to Germany in the 1980s to study philosophy, German literature and Catholic theology in Freiburg im Breisgau and Munich. In 1994 he received his doctoral degree at Freiburg with a dissertation on Stimmung, or mood, in Martin Heidegger.

Abstract

Byung-Chul Han critiques the "infosphere," where digital spaces like Google Earth and the Cloud replace the tangible world, eroding stillness and community. In this digital order, we seek endless information without real knowledge, communicate without genuine connection, and accumulate data without memory. As life becomes dominated by the flow of information, stability and continuity, essential for human dwelling, vanish. Han argues that while the infosphere appears to offer new freedoms, it imposes new forms of control, disconnecting us from the deeper freedom found in engaging with the real world. This work is a profound reflection on technology's impact on life

Quote

"Things no longer have an independent life; they are obedient tools for solving problems. Life itself is seen as problem solving. The handling of things no longer involves conflict. Things no longer appear as unruly actors [ ] there's a quick solution, an app, for everything and that life itself is nothing but a series of problems to be solved."

Quick Impression

"Non-things", as Han defines information, are replacing tangible things, which are now only seen as tools that function in stabilizing human life, obedient to humans. Possessions are rare and all that humans seek are only experiences. Byung-Chul Han defines these non-things as ghostly, intangible and cloud-like. Digital communication changed the definition of distance and closeness in human relations, making us always all connected. To make his point, Han focuses on different technologies, like selfies or artificial intelligence, and different ways of thinking about the concept of "Things". The ideas he brings forward are interesting and relatable to our contemporary relation with technology. The way in which they are analyzed gives the impression that non-things and technological artifacts are something we should contain. For example he refers to the idea of the smart home as a smart prison, because it constantly surveils its users. However, this idea of a prison feels out of touch with reality, it's an over-dramatization of what he's trying to convey, with an example that is a bit too extreme. This happens a few times in the book that otherwise, even if highly pessimistic, is interesting to go through
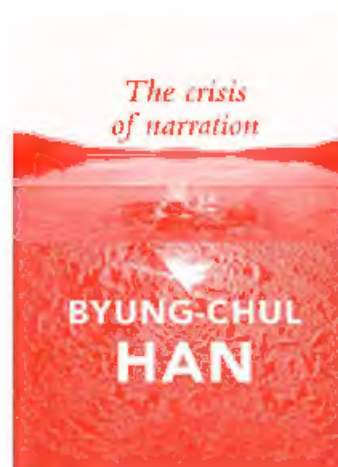
2024

The Crisis of Narration

Byung-Chul Han

Abstract

Byung-Chul Han explores the decline of narrative in contemporary society, where storytelling has become "storyselling." Narratives once created community and offered stability, but in today's information-driven world, storytelling forms only temporary, consumer-based connections. The communal fire of shared stories has been replaced by the digital screen, which isolates rather than unites. Han argues that capitalism has co-opted storytelling, transforming it into a tool for selling, not sharing. This shift reflects society's struggle with contingency and its inability to restore the stable narrative communities of the past, leading to a pathological reliance on storytelling as a means of coping.
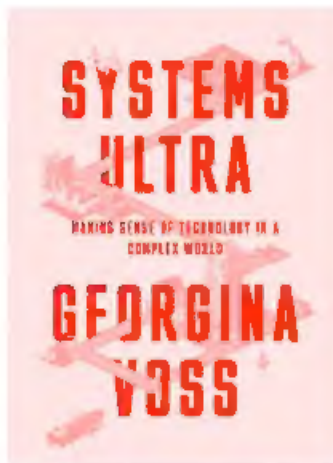
Quote

"The current crisis of narration thus also takes hold of philosophy and puts an end to it. We lack the courage for philosophy, the courage for theory, that is, the courage to create a narrative."

Quick Impression

In *The Crisis of Narration*, Han distinguishes between information, narration, and narratives. He asserts that information intensifies the experience of contingency, while narration serves as a "concluding form," transforming the accidental into necessity. In contrast, he views "narrative" as an "anchor of being." In the chapter titled "Theory as Narrative," Han offers his insight on how psychology and philosophy represent forms of narratives that provide fresh perspectives. He argues that the crisis of narration stems from a decline in new philosophies and theories, which limits our ability to perceive problems from diverse angles and values. In the subsequent chapter, "Narration as Healing," Han explores the cathartic process of self-expression in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, illustrating how narration acts as a healing mechanism that liberates patients from oppression. Throughout the book, Han delivers strong statements in each chapter. However, he often substitutes narration with narratives, despite maintaining that his focus is on narration, which can create some confusion.

Keywords

Narration, Narratives, Information

Biography

Byung-Chul Han (born 1959) is a South Korean-born philosopher and cultural theorist living in Germany. He studied metallurgy at Korea University in Seoul before he moved to Germany in the 1980s to study philosophy, German literature and Catholic theology in Freiburg im Breisgau and Munich. In 1994 he received his doctoral degree at Freiburg with a dissertation on Stimmung, or mood, in Martin Heidegger.

2024

Systems Ultra

Georgina Voss

Keywords

Biography

Georgina Voss is an internationally-exhibiting artist and writer, whose practice spans performance, multimedia installation, text, and research-intensive projects.Originally trained in anthropology and industrial economics, her work explores the politics and presence of large-scale industrial and technological systems.

Abstract

Systems Ultra explores how we experience and interact with complex systems—networks of people, things, and ideas that create their own patterns. Georgina Voss examines systems like ports, air traffic control, architectural software, and car crash testing, arguing that these human-made systems reveal key insights about scale, time, materiality, and breakages. The book questions how much of these systems are designed and how much is emergent, challenging narratives of technological exceptionalism. Voss encourages new literacy around these systems, showing how they shape our lives, and explores possibilities for understanding—and even changing—them.

Quote

Quick Impression

2024

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Johanna Mehl

Biography

Johanna Mehl (she/her) is a PhD candidate in cultural studies and design history at TU Dresden, where she is also a research associate at the Chair for Digital Cultures. Her research examines design as a knowledge culture, focusing on environmental history, cybernetics, and media theory. She holds a B.A. in Communication Design from Niederrhein University and an M.A. in Art and Design Studies from the University of the Arts Folkwang, Essen.

Abstract

This paper critically examines Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber's 1973 work on wicked problems, particularly in social policy. It explores how labeling problems as "wicked" obscures accountability, rendering these issues inevitable and unknowable. By historicizing the concept, the paper analyzes the political, social, and cultural contexts that shaped the idea of wickedness. Additionally, it challenges the prevalent reliance on design solutions in response to crises, considering the unintended consequences of adopting wicked problems as a design framework. Ultimately, the paper aims to question the naturalization of design fixes as a dominant approach to addressing complex societal challenges.

Quote

"The key misconception in the operational framework of wickedness is that more understanding leads to better solutions."

Quick Impression

A recontextualization of wicked problems through an attempted design perspective. The author describes wicked problems are black-boxes. Wicked problems are entangled to the socio-political, therefore they regard bigger frames with bigger structure. And no one "right" solution. Johanna writes: "the key misconception in the operational framework of wickedness is that more understanding leads to better solutions" to explain that the causes of problems are not unknowable to us, but it might be preferable to keep them concealed, or black boxed. The author proposes to go towards "systemic problems" instead of wicked ones, to articulate what is already known, rather then classify problems as unknowable.

PROBLEM SOLVING